

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for effecting procurement of desired items which include products or services or information content, the system comprising:

5 a portable, hand-held user tool, comprising a facility for reading, storing and forwarding identification indicia appearing on or in proximity to the desired items;

10 a central agent facility configured to communicate with a plurality of the user tools and constructed to receive from the hand-held user tools the identification indicia;

15 a database associated with the central agent facility that correlates the desired item identification information received from the hand-held user tools with corresponding supply source information for the desired items available at or from a plurality of suppliers;

a data gathering facility associated with the central agent facility which communicates to the suppliers users requests for the desired items and receives information from the suppliers relevant thereto; and

wherein the central agent facility communicates to the user tools selective information pertaining to the desired items.

2. The system of claim 1, in which the user tool comprises having a sensor, whose mode of operation

selected from the operation group including: optical, magnetic, infrared, sound and bio-sensor.

5 3. The system of claim 2, in which the sensor is incorporated in another device and that other device is selected from the group including: a mobile phone, a mobile terminal, a two-way pager, a PC mouse, a CATV set top box, a digital camera, a watch, and a game.

4. The system of claim 1, in which the tool has a memory for the storage therein of the identification indicia for later retrieval.

5. The system of claim 1, in which the user tool is operable in an off-line mode.

6. The system of claim 1, in which the user tool is operable in an on-line mode.

7. The system of claim 1, in which the identification indicia appears on an item selected from the group or comprising: products, services, or information.

8. The system of claim 1, in which the identification indicia is a digital representative image of a corresponding product.

9. The system of claim 1, in which the agent facility comprises a plurality of selectable facilities which can be selected by a user with the user tool.

10. The system of claim 9, in which the agent facility comprises a plurality of auxiliary facilities.

11. The system of claim 10, in which the auxiliary facilities include an e-rate facility.

12. The system of claim 10, in which the auxiliary facilities include an e-care facility.

13. The system of claim 10, in which the auxiliary facilities include an e-billing and history facility.

14. The system of claim 10, in which the auxiliary facilities include an e-logistics facility.

15. The system of claim 10, in which the auxiliary facilities include an e-search and match demand/supply facility.

16. The system of claim 1, in which the customer tool comprises an e-navigator software facility which effects communication with the agent facility.

17. The system of claim 1, in which the user tool includes an automatically triggered feature that triggers communication with the agent facility without an active step being taken by the user.

18. The system of claim 1, including a virtual browsing facility enabling a user to browse databases of the suppliers without directly accessing the Internet.

19. The system of claim 1, including a facility for rapid submission of reorders and direct commerce.

20. The system of claim 1, further including a facility for causing the central agent to react based on bio feedback transmitted to it by the user tool.

21. The system of claim 10, further including a navigational facility which monitors the location of the user and provides navigational assistance to the user via the agent facility and the suppliers.

22. The system of claim 1, including a facility which responds to requests from the user tool by a communication mode selected from the group including: e-mail, facsimile, letter and automatically triggered voice telephone messages.

23. A method for effecting procurement of desired items which include products or services or information content, the method comprising the steps of:

5 providing users with a portable, hand-held user tool, comprising a facility for forwarding identification indicia defining the desired items;

10 providing a central agent facility configured to communicate with a plurality of the portable user tools and constructed to receive from the user tools the identification indicia;

15 providing in conjunction with the central agent facility a database that correlates the desired item identification information received from the user tools with corresponding supply source information for the desired items available at or from a plurality of suppliers;

20 operating the central agent facility to gather from the plurality of suppliers information responsive to the user requests for the desired items and receiving from the plurality of suppliers information relevant thereto; and

communicating from the central agent facility to the user tools selective information pertaining to the desired items.

24. The method of claim 23, in which the identification indicia comprises a symbol appearing on or in proximity to the desired items.

5 25. The method of claim 23, in which the identification indicia comprises at least a model number of a product or service and including recording in the user tool the model number and the user tool forwarding a voice message of the model number to the central agent facility, and including the central agent facility decoding from the received voice messages the model numbers.

26. The method of claim 23, further including operating the user tool in both on-line and off-line modes.

27. The method of claim 23, further comprising providing responses to user requests at a display provided on the user tools.

5 28. The method of claim 23, including providing responses to requests from the user tools by communicating to users by means of a communication mode selected from a group including: e-mail, facsimile, letter and automatically triggered voice telephone messages.

29. The method of claim 23, in which the user tool comprises a sensor that is able to read identification

indicia appearing on or in proximity to the desired items
and including operating the user tool to read, store and
5 forward the identification indicia to the central agent
facility.